

1 A MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE CREATION OF A STATEWIDE HOUSING FIRST TASK
3 FORCE TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS.
4

5 WHEREAS, forty-two percent of New Mexico renters pay
6 more than thirty percent of their income toward rent; and

7 WHEREAS, twenty-one percent of New Mexico renters pay
8 more than one-half of their income toward rent, leaving them
9 vulnerable to homelessness if a crisis occurs; and

10 WHEREAS, a housing first approach to avoiding and
11 addressing homelessness has been found effective in reducing
12 homelessness; and

13 WHEREAS, a housing first approach gives immediate focus
14 to finding permanent housing for homeless persons and then
15 focuses on providing services that keep families from
16 returning to the streets; and

17 WHEREAS, a housing first approach recognizes that
18 permanent, affordable housing is fundamental in resolving the
19 homelessness crisis and that some persons need supportive
20 services to stay in housing; and

21 WHEREAS, the majority of individuals and families who
22 participate in housing first programs maintain sobriety,
23 attend work or school, successfully manage their budgets,
24 permanently end relationships with abusers and keep their
25 housing long-term; and

1 WHEREAS, social services are more effective when people
2 are living in their own housing, and investments in
3 supportive services for vulnerable families and individuals
4 are, therefore, more sustainable; and

5 WHEREAS, a housing first approach is more cost-effective
6 than letting people remain homeless, because people who have
7 housing are less likely to use emergency rooms; psychiatric
8 facilities; emergency shelters; and prisons, jails and other
9 criminal justice agencies; and

10 WHEREAS, effective discharge planning from institutions,
11 including psychiatric hospitals, hospitals, foster care and
12 correctional facilities, depends on an adequate supply of
13 appropriate housing options in New Mexico communities; and

14 WHEREAS, a housing first approach can lead to a cost
15 savings of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) per person in
16 some communities; and

17 WHEREAS, an increase in investment in housing is
18 associated with a decrease in incarceration rates; and

19 WHEREAS, a significant percentage of people experiencing
20 homelessness have been incarcerated; and

21 WHEREAS, many hard-working families cannot afford to pay
22 for housing and basic necessities, putting them at risk of
23 homelessness due to rapidly rising land prices, slow wage
24 growth, declining real wages and increasing construction
25 costs; and

1 WHEREAS, safe, decent and affordably priced housing
2 provides a foundation for personal success in school and work
3 and is, therefore, a prerequisite for the economic success of
4 New Mexico; and

5 WHEREAS, adopting a housing first approach in New Mexico
6 requires a shift in resources from an emergency system that
7 merely manages the problem of homelessness to a system that
8 helps vulnerable people gain access to and maintain housing;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, the behavioral health purchasing collaborative
11 will soon complete a supportive housing plan that will
12 incorporate a housing first approach and that can serve as a
13 basis for a broader housing first plan; and

14 WHEREAS, coordinating existing resources and plans can
15 help to shift the state's focus to a housing first approach;

16 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE
17 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that a housing first task force be
18 created and charged with the development of a comprehensive
19 housing first plan for the state of New Mexico; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a housing first task force
21 be chaired and convened by the secretary of children, youth
22 and families and that it address ways state agencies may
23 better target and coordinate existing resources and
24 strategies and collaborate on strategic plans to support a
25 housing first approach for all people in New Mexico who need

1 housing; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the housing first plan
3 include persons with disabilities and with addictions;
4 persons discharged from prison or other institutions; and
5 youth and low-income working families in its housing first
6 focus; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the housing first task force
8 identify specific goals and an implementation time line,
9 identify responsible agencies and agents for each
10 implementation goal and propose relevant action steps and
11 performance measurements to evaluate progress for each goal;
12 and

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the housing first task force
14 be composed of representatives from the governor's and
15 lieutenant governor's offices, the children, youth and
16 families department, the human services department, the
17 public education department, the aging and long-term services
18 department, the corrections department, the New Mexico
19 mortgage finance authority, the behavioral health purchasing
20 collaborative, ValueOptions as the single entity for
21 behavioral health services, the New Mexico coalition to end
22 homelessness, the supportive housing coalition of New Mexico,
23 the drug policy alliance, the women's justice project and
24 three service providers; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the housing first task force

1 present a comprehensive plan for implementing a housing first
2 approach to homelessness to the interim welfare reform
3 oversight committee by November 1, 2008; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
5 transmitted to the secretary of children, youth and families
6 and to the secretary or director of each of the organizations
7 named to participate in the task force. _____

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